UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

Student Composers Concert

Tuesday, January 20th, 2026 at 7:30pm | Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park

PROGRAM

The Dark Night of the Soul - Christ of Saint John of the Cross

Matthew Woolard

Amy Lee (Soprano), Liam Aldous (Vibraphone and Wind Chimes), Matthew Woolard (piano)

Goblin Dance

Kelly Du

Audrey Sung (violin), Elaine Wang (piano)

Inorganic

Leander Delos Santos

Dylan Windsor (Alto Saxophone)

Bayan

Reuben Faigao

William Sale (violin)

"small diagram of a bass clarinet as seen in cross section"

Felix Hill

Fabian Nunez Ramos (Bass Clarinet)

Cape Studies

Luke Blackmore

Luke Blackmore (Alto Sax)

The Florence Ashley Songbook

Ashley Seward

Molly Diamant (voice), Matthew Woolard (piano)

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

As part of the Faculty's commitment to improving Indigenous inclusion, we call upon all members of our community to start/continue their personal journeys towards understanding and acknowledging Indigenous peoples' histories, truths and cultures.
Visit indigenous.utoronto.ca to learn more.

PROGRAM NOTES

The Dark Night of the Soul - Christ of Saint John of the Cross

On a recent trip to the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow, Scotland, I was intrigued by Savlador Dali's famous painting, Christ of Saint John of the Cross, which is a modern perspective of the Crucifixion of Christ. Dali's painting is based on a traditional 16th Century sketch of the crucifixion by Saint John of the Cross, a Spanish Roman Catholic priest and mystic. His poem, Dark Night of the Soul, was chosen for the text as it relates to the journey of the soul to be reunited with God. Dali's modern interpretation of the sketch paints Christ from God's unique perspective looking downwards from heaven, and omits the traditional crucifixion nails and crown of thorns. The piece starts with the vibraphone eerily alluding to church bells. The music is meant to elicit the unsettling and mystical atmosphere of suffering, death and ascent towards an uncertain future existence. Wind chimes represent the salvation associated with ethereal crucifixion nails falling towards the ground.

Goblin Dance

This piece depicts a playful and grotesque scene of dancing goblins. The main theme is primarily built on the notes of an octatonic scale, strongly featuring the tritone interval. The use of sharp articulations, extreme dynamics, and dissonance creates an atmosphere of frenzy and unease. In the middle section, the goblins fall into an unsettling waltz, where the piano borrows fragments of the Dies irae Gregorian chant to reference the goblins as figures of medieval folklore.

Inorganic

Inorganic is based on the concepts of software development, and a commentary against the usage of artificial intelligence (AI), in creating art, whether it be film, music, or literature.

Config portrays a software development cycle through the sounds of keyboard typing, and augmented saxophone recordings, that represent errors that plague the start of software development.

Static void main () { illustrates when a program is started over and over again. Commonly when programming and errors appear, numerous instances are run, eventually resulting in a crash.

Println() is a commentary against the usage of artificial intelligence in the arts, which some perceive to be equivalent, or maybe even better to that of a human. This movement portrays a struggle of artificial intelligence that fails to control and create music.

Bayan

Bayan is a piece for solo violin that addresses the corruption in the Filipino government, which was brought to the limelight by nationwide flash floods that took place in the latter half of 2025. The name of this piece translates to “nation” or “the public;” this piece seeks to reflect the state of the bayan — a state of grieving over loved ones and property lost, and growing frustration with current leadership.

The piece opens with a motif taken from the Filipino national anthem, which speaks of the unwavering resolve to protect the Philippines and its people. This motif undergoes several transformations that outline an overarching plot that highlights the danger of compromise and ignorance, and the testing of integrity through hardship and torrential downpour. The piece ends with a fragmented version of the motif, conveying the irreversible damage brought by a system defiled by greed.

"small diagram of a bass clarinet as seen in cross section"

"small diagram of a bass clarinet, folded." explores music as a function of mechanics and gesture. The performers actions are divided into three mechanical systems: breath, mouth articulation, and operation of the instrument (bass clarinet). Each mechanical system moves separately; pitch, rhythm, and structure emerging their accidental collisions.

Cape Studies

“cape studies” is a collection of short movements inspired by a day spent at Cape Spear in the Summer of 2024. A beautiful sunny day brought with it the sonic landscapes of birds, waves crashing and fizzling into foam on the rocks, and an unusually warm breeze off the Atlantic ocean. Suddenly, a thick fog rolled in which seemed to mute the soundscape, reducing its highest frequencies under a blanket of mist. This triggered the lighthouse’s foghorn, which recurs throughout the piece. Each movement, or "study", is designed to express a single sound, with little-to-no variation or development. They just exist as individual sonic moments, trying to be represented and recreated through the saxophone.

The Florence Ashley Songbook

The Florence Ashley Songbook is a cycle of four songs set to poetry from Albertan legal scholar Florence Ashley's 2023 book "Gender/Fucking: The pleasure and politics of living in a gendered body." Movement 1 is a buoyant and energetic reflection on the deep pleasure offered by sex in a transitioned body. It is about excitement so vast that it spills over the boundaries of our selves. Movement 2 is a nervous interlude which hints at death. It is about doing one’s best in the face of tragedy and despair. Movement 3 is a lyrical ballad with many sections. It is about bitterness, remembering, and coming to terms. Movement 4 is a hard rock tune. It is about rage at those who hurt us and the ones we love.

BIOGRAPHIES

Matthew Woolard is currently enjoying his fourth year in the Bachelor of Music Program with a Major in Composition at the University of Toronto. His current Composition Instructor is Dr. Roger Bergs. He has also been instructed by Andrew Clark. Matthew's long term mentor is Professor Larysa Kuzmenko. In 2025, he was awarded the Gwendolen M. Grant Scholarship. In 2024, he was awarded the Jean A. Chalmers Scholarship and the Sotherton Wadhams In-Course Scholarship. In 2023, he was awarded the Arthur Plettner Scholarship and the Joseph Alfred Whealy In-Course Scholarship. Matthew completed his ARCT Diploma from the Royal Conservatory of Music in 2021, achieving First Class Honours with Distinction. His primary instrument is the piano, with his university instructor being Dr. Emily Chiang. He also plays the trumpet for his own enjoyment. Matthew's hometown is Burlington, Ontario.

Kelly Du is a second year undergraduate student studying composition with Hsiu-Ping Patrick Wu. She is interested in composing music with a narrative element, whether through programmatic writing or through genres such as opera and musical theatre. Most recently, she was a composer for the U of T Opera Student Composers Collective, which premiered in January 2026. Her primary instrument is piano, which she currently studies with Dr. Younggun Kim.

Leander Delos Santos is a Filipino-Canadian composer and pianist, currently studying in the Interdisciplinary Music Program with a Composition minor at the University of Toronto. He studies piano under Dr. Asher Armstrong, and composition under Luke Blackmore. His works consist of experimentations with electronics and soundscapes. Furthermore, Leander has experience working on various film scores. Most notably, he has won The Achievement in Score Award at the Toronto Metropolitan Film Festival for his work on the film Foreverland.

Reuben Faigao is a Filipino second-year undergraduate student, pursuing his BMus in Percussion Performance, with a minor in Composition. He is currently studying with Hsiu-Ping Patrick Wu, exploring idiomatic and expressive string writing. He is a recipient of the Russell Hartenberger Percussion Scholarship (2024), the Kathryn Jean Poole In-course Scholar Award (2025) and the Avedis Zildjian Percussion Scholarship (2025). As a percussionist, Reuben is part of the University of Toronto Wind Ensemble and Percussion Ensemble. He has previously performed with the University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Jack Long Honour Band (MusicFest 2025) and Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra. Reuben has also been involved with several on- and off-campus musical theatre productions; notable credits include Dogfight (Thaumatrope Theatre), Anyone Can Whistle (TCDS) and Sweeney Todd (Horrorshow Productions). To God be the glory!

Felix Hill is a Toronto based composer currently completing an undergrad in composition at the University of Toronto. His music explores the nature of timbre, performance, and language.

Luke Blackmore is a Canadian composer, sound artist, and saxophonist based in Toronto and St. John's. His current artistic practice centers around works that explore acoustic and electronic spaces, and he is interested in exploring the connections and divisions between these two sonic environments. Luke's work seeks to investigate how these boundaries can be exploited, assured, and otherwise manipulated in order to subvert the collective expectations of audiences. His music explores the tenacious relationship between technological innovation and human performance practice. Luke holds degrees from the University of Toronto and Memorial University, and has studied under Gary Kulesha, Kotoka Suzuki, Eliot Britton, and Andrew Staniland, among others. He is currently pursuing his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the

University of Toronto. Luke is the recipient of numerous awards and commissions, most notably the SSHRC CGS-M grant for his ongoing creative research into computer-controlled instrument systems. His music has been performed and recorded by multiple performers and ensembles such as the JACK Quartet, the Alkali Collective, Josh Rubin, Ryan Scott, Mark Fewer, and others. Luke's compositions have been performed from coast-to-coast in Canada, in venues ranging from dive bars to concert halls.

Ashley Renee Seward is a composer living and working in so-called Toronto, Canada. She is currently studying at the University of Toronto, and has recently finished a Master of Music in Composition at the University of British Columbia. Ashley exists in spaces between genres, genders, niches, and social-hierarchical positionalities and illuminates these tensions in her music. She enjoys writing for all instruments and ensembles, with a particular interest in small chamber ensembles and opera. Ashley has written music for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Standing Wave Ensemble, Allegra Chamber Orchestra, and the Kensington Sinfonia, among others. In 2021, Ashley's work "trypanophobia" for viola sola was awarded a runner-up prize in that year's SOCAN Young Composers Competition. Ashley's piece "Storms Over Camp Creek" was recorded in 2023 by the Kensington Sinfonia for their album Forces of Nature. In 2023, Ashley was among the first musical artists to be shortlisted for the Portfolio Prize. Ashley's music has been lauded as "iconoclastic" and "conceptually intriguing" by various important composers. When not composing, Ashley likes to play video games and plan out her Magic: The Gathering decks.